

Participation is the key to implementation!

Muhtari Aminu-Kano, Birdlife International

Since COP-8 in Brazil last year, there is a general agreement that the CBD has made sufficient progress at the global level in developing structures, programmes of work, guidelines and processes. The focus in the post-COP8 period should be on enhanced implementation particularly at the national and sub-national levels. In other words, following the environmental motto to 'think globally and act locally', the CBD has done sufficient thinking *globally* and this must now be matched with action *locally*.

In translating the provisions of such high-level international agreements to national and sub-national action, the engagement and active involvement of civil society groups and indigenous and local communities is absolutely essential. Indigenous and local communities (ILCs) are *rightsholders* that must be respected by nations in their implementation of the CBD. But too, ILCs have the numbers, knowledge, cultures and traditions necessary for achieving the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Programmes that exclude them in the process of planning, implementation, management and monitoring have little chance of success.

In the analysis prepared by the Secretariat, many Parties to the CBD have identified the lack of participation as a key obstacle to national implementation. *Without mobilizing the total national capacities from all the rightsholders and stakeholders, it is simply impossible to make progress at implementing such a comprehensive and complex framework as the CBD.*

In many countries, there is very little space for participation in NBSAPs, national reports, and overall participation within national-level CBD implementation. In many cases, policy and capacity constraints have restricted CBD implementation to a desk within a single government department. *Often, NBSAPs and CBD National Reports are drafted by fly-in consultants with very limited consultation. A participatory approach would have been more cost-effective and more importantly, promoted CBD understanding, ensured buy-in and enhanced the chance of implementation.*

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Today's ECO

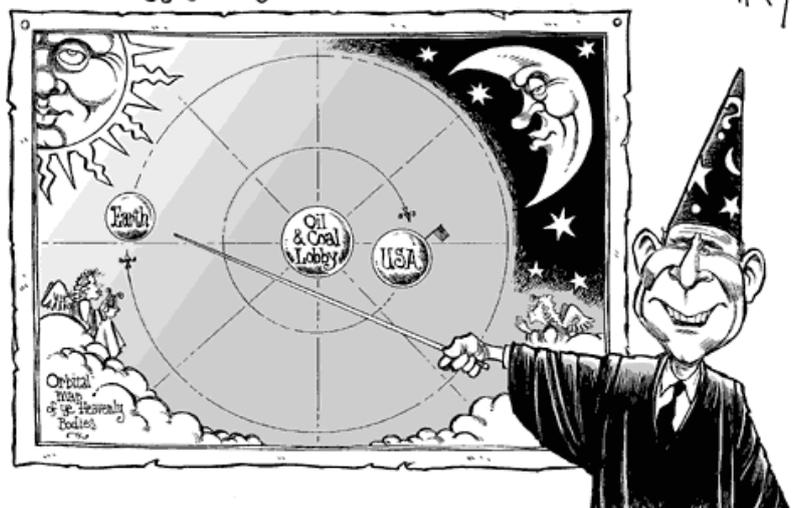
1. Participation is key
2. India's track record

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And the #1 barrier to implementation is:

The Cosmology of George W. Bush...



"RELAX! IT'S THE EARTH THAT'S WARMING UP, NOT THE UNITED STATES!"

Is India falling off the cutting edge at CBD?

Roy Laifungbam

India, who was widely recognised as a key player in the development of the Convention on Biological Diversity during the 90s for championing not just the critical needs of biodiversity conservation but also the interests of the poor communities, is now a mere shadow of this much lauded past stature. During the 12th session on the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-12) last week, the main focus of international debate were those of agro-fuels (bio-fuels, especially liquid bio-fuels) and the linkages between biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation activities. On both these critical fronts, India has been a non-player failing to provide the leadership expected from its enthusiastic promotion of the Convention in the 90s.

This disappointing profile of India, apparent even in last Conference of Parties in Curitiba, Brazil (March 2006) was worse at last week's SBSTTA. India strongly portrayed its national mission to increase bio-diesel production and use. The increase of acreage under *Jatropha* is to be accelerated in so-called "degraded forest and barren lands"; and India is already claiming to have established a compulsory 5% bio-diesel mix in petrol which it sees to increase to 20% by 2017. Portrayed as heroic measures to address GHGs emissions and its impact on climate change, these measures ignore the fact that there are well-recognised adverse effects on indigenous and tribal peoples, local communities and forest peoples.

Hopefully we will see more from India at this week's Working Group on the Review of Implementation (WGRI). But, unfortunately, India's Third National Report reads as an outrageous litany of untruths and unfulfilled promises. A full seven years after the country began an exercise to develop a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action

Plan (NBSAP), it has yet to finalize one that was created out of an innovative participatory process, a process that included over 50,000 people. National environment impact assessment procedures for mega-project proposals have been drastically revised to remove even a perfunctory tokenism to safeguard biodiversity, paving the way for corporate invasion of India's last natural forests in its resource rich North Eastern Region, a trend that moves further away from the established Akwe: Kon guidelines.

The 2010 targets to 'reduce the rate of biodiversity loss' are fast approaching its deadlines, with the call for the three Rio conventions to support each other in addressing climate change. Yet, the issue of national implementation is one of deep concern because many Parties are yet to formulate their programmes according to their obligations under the CBD. India's recognised stature as a large democracy with very rich biodiversity and related knowledge (traditional and modern) is eroding quickly. India's non-compliant activities (in respect to the CBD) are moving us backwards in a world that urgently must go forward – together – to halt biodiversity loss.

And on Participation at the International Level...

As Parties consider implementation this week and leading up to COP 9, we urge them to support the Executive Secretary's request for increased funding for 'major group' focal points within the Secretariat (i.e. Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, NGOs, Women) that was denied at COP 8. These focal points not only help to ensure effective civil society participation in CBD processes, but if resourced properly, could also help to advance implementation and the participation of civil society at national levels.

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Furthermore, increased and efficient participation of rightsholders and stakeholders provides the ways and means to overcome other serious obstacles such as the need for increased capacity and technical and financial resources. It is not surprising, therefore, that countries that have instituted effective mechanisms for participation are also the ones that have recorded the most progress in implementation.

As the second meeting of Ad-hoc Open-ended Working Group on Implementation (WGRI-2) discusses obstacles to the national implementation of the Convention this week, observers are hoping that the crucial role of genuine and broad participation by civil society representatives and indigenous and local communities will be fully recognized and supported (and this must mean much more than just one or two big international NGOs). Such recognition could be reflected by emphasizing participation of Indigenous and local communities and stakeholders as *prerequisite* for effective national implementation in the preamble to the recommendations of the working group to the COP. This Convention needs additional resources (in the North and in the South), but too, Parties must push for participatory processes that prioritize civil society. Who else will make sure change happens on the ground?